(c) whether the system will be reviewed; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) STD PCO are allotted by the STD PCO allotment committee constituted one for each SSA consisting of 2 official members, and non-official members, one each nominated by sitting Members of Parliament representing the SSA. Educational qualification is 8th pass for rural areas and Matric/High School pass for urban areas. Preference is given to the following categories of persons:

1. Handicapped including blind persons.
2. SC/ST Applicants.
3. Ex-Servicemen & War Widows.
4. Retired DOT employees or their dependents.
5. Dependents of Freedom Fighters.
6. Charitable Institutions/Hospitals.

(b) No, Sir.

(c and d) No, Sir. The policy has already been reviewed recently.

Expansion of Telephone Exchange at Vegeswarapuram and Polavaram in West Godavari

457. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state;

(a) whether it is a fact that sufficient expansion of Vegeswarapuram and Polavaram Exchanges in West Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh is not being done;

(b) the present capacities of Polavaram and Vegeswarapuram telephone exchanges;

(c) whether these two exchanges are proposed to be expanded shortly; and

(d) the steps proposed to improve telecom capacity in West Godavari district in Andhra Pradesh in 1997-98?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) The present capacity of Polavaram is 184 Lines and that of Vegeswarapuram it is 336 Lines.

(c) It is proposed to install 824 Lines C-DOT SBM Exchange at Vegeswarapuram during 1997-98. However, at Polavaram exchange sufficient spare capacity is still available to clear the W/L. This Exchange will be expanded suitably as and when the demand increases.

(d) All the MAXIII type Electromechanical exchanges have been converted into electronic exchanges. During 1997-98, it is proposed to add about 20000 Lines by way of installing 20 electronic exchanges of various sizes and carrying out expansions of existing exchanges at about 9 places.

Post offices in Bihar

458. SHRI GYAN RANJAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state;

(a) the number of villages without post offices in Bihar during 1995-96 and 1996-97, as on date;

(b) the number of villages in the State having Post Offices, distict-wise, category-wise; and

(c) the number of post offices proposed to be opened during 1996-97 in the State, distict-wise, category-wise?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) the number of villages without Post Offices in Bihar during 1995-96 and 1996-97 as on date is as under:

Year	No. of villages without Post Office.
1995-96	66718
1996-97 (as on date)	66696